

The

WARNICK REPORT

*Rep. Judy Warnick * 13th District*



Rep. Judy Warnick

Toll-free:

(800) 562-6000

E-mail:

Warnick.J@leg.wa.gov

Web site:

www.houserepublicans.wa.gov/Warnick

Olympia office

(open during session)

436 John L. O'Brien Building

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

(360) 786-7932

District office

(open after session in April)

326 South Cedar St.

Moses Lake, WA 98837

(509) 766-6505

Committees

Local Government (new)

Transportation (new)

Judiciary

Agriculture & Natural Resources

2008 Legislative Session Preview

Dear friends and neighbors,

I hope you are all enjoying the year with a fresh start and new beginnings.

The 2008 general session began Jan. 14 and we are already busy at work. I have taken a lot of your feedback and translated that into action for the Legislature. Three of the most important issues for our district are land-related issues, water and small business opportunities.

Since the exempt well petition was filed in Kittitas County, I attended the Department of Ecology's "listening sessions" and spoken with officials to protect your rights as well as the region's economic growth. I heard your frustration over this age-old matter and I think we need more information before we make a hasty decision. Rep. Hinkle and I requested the governor to include funding for a groundwater study in upper Kittitas County to be jointly managed by Kittitas County and the state.

In December, Rep. Hinkle and I met with small businesses in our district to discuss changes we can make for our small business climate that will benefit the rest of our community.

Please take a minute to look at what I am working on. I would love to hear what you think about these and other issues that affect you. My door is always open here in Olympia. If you can't make the drive though, please feel free to give me a call or send me an e-mail.

In Your Service,

Judy Warnick

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Land and Water Issues

Exempt wells in Kittitas County

Although the Department of Ecology rejected the exempt well moratorium in Kittitas County, officials are working with the county for a compromise that may still put economic growth at risk. "Interim standards" agreed upon by Kittitas County commissioners and Ecology will likely become permanent in a "memorandum of agreement" that is expected to be released after public hearings to discuss the draft.

The interim standards, among other things, call for an exempt well restriction of 5,000 gallons per 40 acres every day. The previous statewide limits, set by the Legislature, allowed land owners a ground water permit exemption if the water use is for domestic use and did not exceed 5,000 gallons a day on a five-acre lot. I'm concerned about this, and have been following it closely as many of you have. Your opinion matters the most, and I sincerely hope Ecology hears what the majority of you said at the "listening sessions" last fall.



You can also visit Ecology's Web site for more information about this issue, including the complete temporary agreement, at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cro/kittitas_wp.html.

I'll also be working with the department to make sure senior water rights are protected and permit applications are processed — some property owners have been waiting for more than 10 years.

Quincy water treatment facility



I am pleased the governor included \$9 million in her supplemental budget toward funding the Quincy water treatment facility. The facility needs to supplement current operations to support recent growth in the area. It is capable of pumping four million gallons a day — with two major food processors as the major consumers of water. With additional facilities, the city can treat filtered water to city standards and then remove additional minerals.

Recreational opportunities

As an avid horseback rider, I enjoy taking long trips through the Teanaway and other areas. Opportunities also abound for snowmobiling and skiing in our district.



The use of our public lands is invaluable, and one of the greatest benefits of living in our beautiful state.

Our ever-growing population has put demands on public lands and begs that we respond to varied interests now. I am co-sponsoring House Bill 2472 that calls for a work group to study how our state can improve recreational opportunities. Public access to public lands is very important to me.

Burn ban holiday

For those living in urban growth areas that are outside city limits, property owners are permanently banned from burning. Every time we have a storm in which the governor declares a state of emergency, those burn bans are lifted so property owners can apply for burn permits to clean up their land and burn excess debris. I often hear from people who are frustrated with the burn ban — just two days of being allowed to burn would give people some relief. I'm sponsoring a bill which would create burn ban holidays on the first and third Saturdays of November.



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Hunting and fishing

I'm also introducing a bill that removes the sunset on the Fish & Wildlife Commission Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities. Since 2001, this group of seven volunteers, all of whom are disabled themselves, has set regulations for hunters who are disabled. Without



the measure I'm proposing, we would lose these folks in July this year. I want to make sure they continue their good work without interruption.

Small Business and Creating Jobs

In December, the restaurant association and small business groups discussed with Rep. Hinkle and me what they need to create a better business environment. One of the concerns that we hear often is frustration with annual minimum wage increases in our state. Washington has the highest minimum wage in the country.



I have also heard from many of you regarding minor work rules. I've heard from grandparents who can't hire their grandkids to work on their family farm. I've heard from restaurant owners who can't hire teenagers to work for more than twenty hours during the school week. I've heard from college-bound students who can't save enough for tuition.

To address this, I will be co-sponsoring a bill that adjusts the number of hours that minors are allowed to work. Currently, businesses can only hire 16- and 17-year olds for 20 hours a week, including weekends. I think increasing the limit to 28 hours a week will make progress on this issue by giving businesses more help, while teaching students useful work skills for their futures.

Continuing Issues...

Transportation and rail

I was recently assigned to the Transportation Committee and look forward to using my position to speak more for our district's highway and rail needs.

I want to make sure the Snoqualmie Pass project gets appropriate funding to ensure this major pass is safer. The project will provide increased capacity, improved sight distance and reduced avalanche closures among other things. The first phase of the project will widen the highway and stabilize slopes to help prevent avalanches. Construction is slated to begin in 2010.

The privately-owned Columbia Basin Railroad is making plans to move the rail line in Moses Lake to better serve economic growth. Several options are on the table, including keeping the rail line at the Port of Moses Lake. A study by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) found 58 percent of respondents wanted to keep the rail line at the port and in north Moses Lake. Public comment is still being taken on this project, so if this issue is important to you, I encourage you to contact WSDOT at (360) 705-7938. You can also find more information about this project at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Rail/NorthernColumbiaBasinRR. It's very important that we find the correct route for our area's needs.



I also received a request from the Moses Lake School District and the Columbia Basin Railroad to secure funding for an underpass near Longview Elementary School. The project would allow students and other pedestrians to safely cross the rail line to the school. I am requesting funding for this project in the Legislature's supplemental budget.



Rep. Warnick testifies in a committee hearing

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Public safety

Public safety will continue to be a priority in Olympia this year. Along with my colleagues in the House, I will be supporting several measures that address our state's problems with sex offenders and gangs. Several bills are being proposed that would force sex offenders to be held more accountable for their actions, as well as to help our communities and the Department of Corrections to follow these criminals once they have been released. I was recently appointed to the Correctional Industries Board, and I hope to use this position to ensure felons are prepared with work skills and have the opportunity to pay off their financial obligations to society.

Gangs are more prevalent in our state than many think – although this is not surprising to our friends in Grant and Yakima Counties. A gang task force created last year came out with several recommendations for solving the problem. Among them was allowing cities to use civil anti-gang injunctions. The injunctions, which have used effectively in California, prevent gang crime by arresting proven gang members for associating with one another, or for engaging in activities that are known to lead to crime. I support this idea and hope the Legislature can come to an agreement over this matter. While we need to protect civil liberties, we have to do something to better prevent the gang-related shootings, assaults and robberies that occur every day in our state.



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Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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